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THE REINDEER ONE OF ALASKA'S IMPORTANT INDUSTRIES.  
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Washington, D. C.,                      There are not less than 30,000 domesticated reindeer in Alaska today, according to estimates of the Department of Agriculture. This means that the reindeer industry is by far the largest agricultural proposition in Alaska at this time, and more stringent government measures should be taken to prevent the rapid destruction of these animals. The industry under scientific management should develop rapidly, according to experts, and the present herds form a very promising basis upon which a great industry may be built.

It appears that there have been instances of cross-breeding domesticated reindeer and the native wild caribou. It is thought that the blood of the latter could be used to good advantage in building up the reindeer herds. At present the domesticated deer seem to decrease in size and otherwise degenerate because of the lack of careful selection of breeding animals. The caribou are superior in size and vigor, but are not of so wild a nature as to make their domestication impracticable.

That portion of Alaska which offers the fewest other agricultural opportunities is the region best suited to the reindeer. So the industry may be developed without encroaching on other lines of farming. The existence of white reindeer-moss in all the Arctic region of Alaska permits the occupancy of vast regions that would otherwise be uninhabitable. The reindeer subsist mainly on this native herbage winter and summer. They require no shelter and little care beyond the restraint of a herder to keep them from wandering. The meat is of excellent quality and the skins are valuable. In Europe the deer are used for dairy and transportation purposes, and while little attempt has thus far been made in our territory along these lines, there are possibilities of similar development.

At present the individual ownership of reindeer is principally restricted to Eskimos and Indians. Some of the missions still possess herds and there are a few Government herds. No breeding deer may be sold to whites. The Alaska division of the Bureau of Education has supervision of all herds, the teachers of the Government school for native children located nearest a herd having immediate charge.

Besides the promising status of the reindeer industry in our Arctic possession, cattle and sheep raising, fruit raising and the problems of the homesteader in the Far North are extensively treated in the Department of Agriculture's new bulletin--"Possible Agricultural Development In Alaska."

According to the investigators, there are unsurpassed cattle and sheep raising lands to be found on the Alaskan islands and in certain places near the shore on the mainland. Winter forage for cattle and sheep is provided largely from the native grasses, both hay and silage being made. The practicability of raising stock, however, except in small herds close to individual farms has not been sufficiently investigated to warrant more than an intimation of its possibilities. There are serious obstacles to be considered: the long winters, boggy land, mosquitoes and carnivorous animals. These objections, however, do not interfere seriously with the reindeer industry.

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